



NORTHWEST HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

GARDENnotes

SPRING 2022

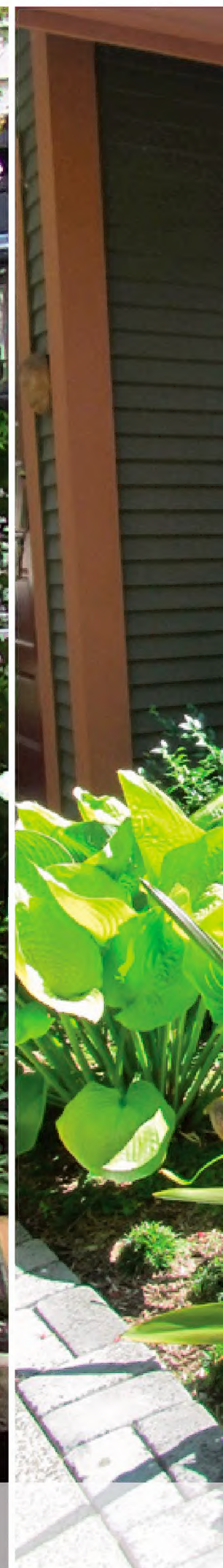


Daphne × *transatlantica* 'Blafra' ETERNAL FRAGRANCE™
Image by Richie Steffen



Small Garden, BIG DESIGN!

Words & Images by Sue Goetz



Create drama instead of clutter with a large pathway of flagstone.

A balcony, terrace, the narrow corridor between house and property line, or a city lot—what is the definition of your small garden? Is it living up to its potential? Don't be afraid to infuse bold design ideas into small spaces. Use similar principles of an expansive landscape but dial it down to a small area. Another nuance of small design is that all the area is premium, and you need to consider every square inch to take advantage of all available space, whether for plants, storage, or a living space outside.



Warm color play in an entry garden on a past NHS tour.

Style vs. Lifestyle

This gets personal. What is your space to you? Everyone interprets their space differently. Do you want to grow vegetables or create a sanctuary to sit and read or meditate? Knowing what you really want gives a clear focus on designing a space. For example, if you want an edible garden, you give more room for plants and grow compact growing fruits and vegetables. If you want a sanctuary space to read or have downtime, you need to provide more room for seating. Once you decide all of this, you will find yourself designing — without thinking you are a designer. Once you meet your needs, you can stylize from there.

Scale (it's not what you think)

There is a tendency to design small elements in a small space, but it is the opposite — think big and bold. Depending on what you are planning, scaling garden elements up in size will make a space feel larger. Too many tiny pots or a smattering of different varieties of small plants and art objects everywhere creates clutter. Your eye cannot rest on any one thing as it bounces around to see it all. It makes your brain hurt just thinking about it. Fewer, oversized items and a simple color palette will make a space appear more expansive. Significant hardscape elements make a statement. Imagine oversize stone for walkways rather than many small pieces. Pottery can make an impact by the size chosen. It typically takes the same amount of floor space to use a pot eighteen inches high and wide as one eighteen inches wide and three feet tall, so go for the taller effect. It is more thinking about the word proportion to meet the needs of scale. Proportion is a balance of the size of the furniture, water features, fire pit, which logically relate to the whole picture.

Steal the View

To give the garden the illusion of being larger, look beyond the garden space. Distant scenery can be as important as what is right in front of you. Carefully look at how to integrate a view of the mountains, water, or a neighbor's lovely tree, then build ideas on how you frame it into your plan.



A brick edge creates the shape to border a small lawn area.



The mirror on the brick wall reflects the garden in the courtyard, making it appear larger than it is.



A narrow pergola and trellis define a shady spot on a warm day.



The geometry of a paver pathway frames a walkway.



Don't fear oversized bold pottery in small spaces to make a statement.



A dining area tucks nicely into a small space.



A fence and pathway frame a side area to the back garden.

Indoor – Outdoor

Small space garden design is an extension of the home; the inside and out are usually very connected. Look carefully at vistas, visuals, and views from inside in all seasons. Your outside garden should not feel disconnected but share its beauty when you are inside. A small garden will appear larger if it flows and harmonizes with the living space attached to it. Using the idea of a “room” makes thinking through small garden design less daunting. For example, if you like to dine al fresco, think of the garden as a dining “room.” First, you need a level space like a deck or patio for tables and chairs, then add an outdoor rug. Next, look at the outer perimeter of the dining space. Do you want privacy? Look for ways to create living plant buffers, like espalier *Camellia sasanqua*, to build the “walls” of the room. Finally, add shade from a structure, a tree, or an umbrella if the sun is uncomfortable during dining times whether breakfast on the terrace or dinner on the patio.

Patterns and Shapes

Pay attention to your geometry — various small fussy shapes, dead ends, and zigzags create clutter. Serpentine lines, angular patterns, circles, and squares need bold, long strokes. Defining uninterrupted lines that draw the eye and focus will make a space feel purposeful. Even a tiny balcony garden with many pottery shapes and colors will look too busy and claustrophobic. Instead, stick with appropriate angles and shapes. Create the coloring book lines by defining walkways, patios, or whatever you consider an element you will invest in and not move. Between those hard lines is where you get to color up with plants.

Color and Light

Color is a mood maker and changes the way a space feels. Red, yellow, and orange are energy colors and can make an area feel degrees warmer than it is. If the garden is dark and dingy, the colors of fire will brighten it up. Dark spaces can also benefit from neutral colors on patio surfaces and walls, so natural light can bounce and reflect. To quiet a harsh, bright area down, use calming colors that lower blood pressure, like blues, purples, and greens. Green will make the area feel cooler in temperature. Change the sterile environment of concrete and walls by softening with plants or painting with a pleasing color. Watch how natural sunlight and shadows play in your space. Pale colors and pastels have a different beauty in the softness of morning and evening light than they do in direct sun. You may have to dip into deep colors to add more pizzazz. Take pieces of colored paper or paint swatches, set them out in the natural light, and watch what happens.



A blue bench gives a cool vibe in a small seating area.



Outdoor living in a small space.

Oh yes, it is about the plants too!

The soft side of planning elements in the garden is the plants. Bold, simple plantings and repeated vivid colors against verdant backdrops will help balance too much and too little. To avoid plant clutter, consider blends of repeated plants to complete the whole picture. Use plants that provide good contrast and dimension and make wise choices of plants for their compact habits. Many large growing shrubs and trees have a "dwarf" version. The Latin term "nana" (meaning dwarf or smaller) in the plant name will give you a clue. Check out www.greatplantpicks.org for a helpful list of plants for small spaces. If you are a plant collector with a scattering of different species, add a single bold plant as a centerpiece or add feature plants as the bone structure that create a visual link around your collectible plantings.

When thinking through your small garden areas, individual needs and size challenges will vary, but good planning and following some design principles is the success to maximizing your space. Much can be said for the benefits of small spaces as there is a less costly outlay for large amounts of plants and hardscape, and the end product of less weeding and upkeep. It makes sense to enjoy every square inch, so take a second look and fill it up with style. 🌿

Sue Goetz, CPH, eco-PRO, garden designer, speaker, and author. www.suegoetz.com

SMART PLANTS FOR SMALL SPACES

Great Plant Picks is a Northwest-based nonprofit educational program from the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden. For more information, go to greatplantpicks.org.

URBAN STURDY



Cotoneaster salicifolius 'Repens'
SPREADING WILLOWLEAF
COTONASTER

Anemone nemorosa
WOOD ANEMONE



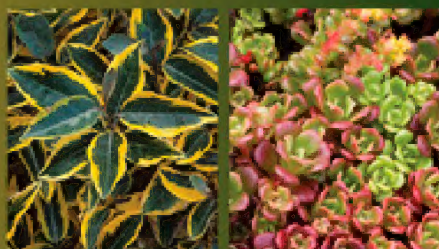
Citrus x hybridus
WHITE ROCKROSE

Chiosanthus retusus
CHINESE FRINGE TREE



Veronica peduncularis 'Georgia Blue'
GEORGIA BLUE SPEEDWELL

Achillea 'Moonshine'
MOONSHINE YARROW



Elaeagnus x ebbingei 'Gilt Edge'
GILT EDGE VARIEGATED ELAEGNUS

Sedum oreopsum
OREGON STONECROP



Veronica cuspidata
BOUGHTON BROOM

Abelia x grandiflora 'Kaleidoscope'
KALEIDOSCOPE VARIEGATED ABELIA

SNUG SPACES



Adiantum x tracyi
TRACY'S MAIDENHAIR FERN

Zillium grandiflorum
GREAT WHITE TRILLIUM,
WHITE WAKE-ROBIN



Oenothera 'Flicker'
FLICKER OENOOTHERA

Taxus canadensis 'Standishii'
STANDISHII GOLDEN YEW



Arisaema striatum
JAPANESE COBRA LILY

Geum 'Double Bloody Mary'
DOUBLE BLOODY MARY GEUM



Disporum uniflorum (lign. *D. flavum*)
TART BELLS

Lilium 'Star Gazer'
STAR GAZER ORIENTAL LILY



Ilex chrysocarpa 'Garnet'
GARNET JAPANESE BARBERRY

Cupressus nootkatensis
GREEN ARROW WEEPING
ALASKAN YELLOW CEDAR

CAPTIVATING CONTAINERS



Begonia grandis ssp. *evansiana*
MADDY BEGONIA

Clematis 'Clematis 51'
SAPPHIRE INDIGO CLEMATIS



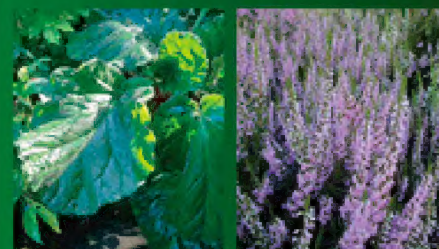
Junonia-Mori macro 'Aureola'
VARIEGATED JAPANESE
FOREST GRASS

Acer palmatum 'Shana'
SHANA DWARF RED
JAPANESE MAPLE



Trillium 'Tale of Silk'
TALE OF SILK LILY

Hosta 'Fragrant Bouquet'
FRAGRANT BOUQUET HOSTA



Bergenia ciliata (lign. *D. flavum*)
DUMBO BERBERIS

Calluna vulgaris 'Spring Torch'
SPRING TORCH HEATHER



Polystichum polylephorum
JAPANESE TASSEL FERN

Fatsia japonica 'Murakumo nishiki'
CAMOUFLAGE JAPANESE FATISIA

The Seattle Times
PACIFIC NW

PHOTOGRAPHY
Blooming Nursery, Jay Creek Nursery, Sue Olsen,
Rick Peterson, Richie Steffen, T&L Nursery

This poster has been produced in partnership with Pacific NW magazine and The Seattle Times. Great Plant Picks is administered by the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden.

greatplantpicks.org

As our cities and suburbs grow, more gardeners have limited space for their horticultural activities. For 2022 Great Plant Picks has created a list featuring great plants for challenging urban situations, spaces that are limited in size (think a 1' by 10' planting strip along a driveway), and appealing containers for decks and patios.

There are perennials, ferns, bamboos, grasses, vines, shrubs, trees, and conifers that will grow well and bring beauty to smaller landscapes and containers. Go to WWW.GREATPLANTPICKS.ORG to discover a variety of plants that have been vetted by green industry experts! 🌿



OSMANTHUS: A FORTUNE OF FRAGRANCE FOR THE SPRING GARDEN

Words & Images by Richie Steffen

Osmanthus delavayi



(1) *Osmanthus delavayi*, (2) *O. decorus*, (3) *O. × burkwoodii*, (4) *O. yunnanensis*, (5) *O. serrulatus*, (6) *O. suavis*

Spring is a time of flashy, colorful flowers and lush, vibrant green growth, so it is easy to overlook many of the spring-flowering *Osmanthus*. On several species, the small flowers are hidden in the leaves and their evergreen foliage, although beautiful, is shared by many other showier flowered broad-leaf evergreens. If it was not for the abundantly produced and intensely fragrant blooms, these *Osmanthus* might easily be forgotten in favor of the hundreds of cultivars of rhododendrons and camellias. I do enjoy an underdog shrub, a sleeper that does not show its full usefulness at first glance. When I first moved to Seattle in 1989, I soon recognized that *Osmanthus* were such plants.

The first spring-flowering *Osmanthus* that caught my eye were the showiest in flower and the most commonly used in landscapes, *Osmanthus delavayi* and *Osmanthus* × *burkwoodii*. These two species are similar in many ways which is to be expected since *O. delavayi* is one of the parents of the hybrid *O. × burkwoodii*. Both are covered in pure white tubular flowers in mid-March to early April that are on the large size for this genus, about a half inch across. The blooms are tightly held in clusters along the branch tips and emit a sweet, intoxicating fragrance that draws in pollinators and gardeners alike. As young plants, both tend to produce long whips of growth. If tip pruned, the shrub responds by freely branching making a dense shrub. If left to grow on

their own, a height of 10 to 12 feet can be obtained after many years. Large, older plants can be quite striking by creating a rounded shrub with billowy growth held by sinewy, sculptural trunks. Both species also make excellent hedge plants and can be shaped and sheared, although it will be at the expense of heavy flowering. Clipped *O. delavayi* tends to have a looser, shaggier look than the tight growth of an *O. × burkwoodii* hedge, yet both are a serviceable barrier. When side by side the two plants are easy to tell apart. *O. delavayi* has smaller more rounded leaves with a distinct fine-toothed edge, slightly prickly to the touch, while *O. × burkwoodii* is a little larger and lacks the sharp-toothed edge. Both tolerate a considerable amount of drought, with *O. × burkwoodii*,



Comparison of *Osmanthus* × *burkwoodii* (L) and *Osmanthus delavayi* (R) foliage.



Osmanthus × *burkwoodii*



Osmanthus × *burkwoodii*

perhaps being a little more drought tolerant. Plant in well-drained soil in full sun to dappled shade. Both were chosen as Great Plant Picks selections for their superior performance in our region. Both are hardy to USDA zones 7 to 9.

Regrettably, all other spring-flowering *Osmanthus* are relatively difficult to find in nurseries, but well worth the search. One that I find looks remarkably similar to *Osmanthus* × *burkwoodii* is *Osmanthus suavis*. Slightly less hardy, for USDA zones 8 and 9, this species obtains the similar size and shape of *O.* × *burkwoodii*. The fragrant flowers are more tubular than *O.* × *burkwoodii* and are a little smaller but hang along the branches in a charming way on closer inspection. Native to the slopes of the Himalayan mountains and southeastern Asia, most plants in our area are from collections made by Dan Hinkley, founder of Heronswood Garden in Kingston, Washington. This is an extremely tough species and will tolerate drought once well established. If you can find this species, it will make an excellent framework plant in the back of the border.

The Miller Garden has a nice collection of *Osmanthus*. Mrs. Miller had a fondness for the genus that I share as well. One particularly fine species that is completely absent from the nursery trade is *Osmanthus serrulatus*. The handsome



Osmanthus yunnanensis

evergreen foliage is reminiscent of camellias and shares the leathery dark green appearance, but the branch structure of this *Osmanthus* species provides a more refined, attractive habit. In late March to early April, round buds burst open revealing creamy white flowers that release a powerfully sweet fragrance that wafts through the garden. The flowers

*Osmanthus serrulatus*

are so abundantly produced that they encircle the stems and look like a fluffy white foam surrounding the foliage. The Miller Garden shrub is in rich organic soil and receives regular watering during the summer, but I suspect that it would still grow well in any decent garden soil with just an occasional watering during droughty weather. This is truly a plant that deserves wider use in our region. If you do happen to find a plant, give it full sun to open shade. It is a slow grower, maturing to about 10 to 12 feet tall and wide over many years. Perhaps hardy to USDA zone 7b, but reliable in 8 and 9.

Another rare *Osmanthus* that Mrs. Miller grew to perfection was the tree forming *Osmanthus yunnanensis*. This conspicuous evergreen shrub has lanceolate leaves that are 6 to 8 inches long and a dark olive matte green in color. The leaves are thick and hard in texture with spiny toothed juvenile foliage and smooth-edged adult growth. Technically, this is not a true spring bloomer with tufts of fragrant flowers opening in February to early March, but it is close enough for this article. NHS symposium speaker Nick Macer of Pan Global Plants (United Kingdom) described the fragrance as a mixture of vanilla and Play-Doh, a most enticing description! Mrs. Miller's old plant died several years ago, but we have acquired a young plant that will find a new space in the Miller Garden. The first plant of this shrub that I saw in

Seattle was a large specimen at Kubota Garden in the Rainier Beach neighborhood of Seattle. The large shrub was next to the Kubota's old house which has since been removed; fortunately, this rare shrub still stands. Plant in open or bright shade with protection from the hot afternoon sun. A ten-year-old plant can reach about 8 to 10 feet tall with similar spread. Older plants can reach small tree proportions of 18 to 25 feet tall. Plant in well-drained soil with occasional summer watering. Hardy in USDA zones 8 and 9.

The last of the spring-flowering *Osmanthus* to be discussed is one I hold a special connection with, *Osmanthus decorus*. Once more available in the Seattle area than what it is today, you can find old plants in established neighborhoods. This large, spreading shrub is not very fashionable in today's gardens but can still occasionally be found through specialty nurseries. This is the first *Osmanthus* I saw in the wild on my first overseas botanizing trip. Traveling to northeastern Turkey in 2000 with two good friends, Dan Hinkley and Bob Beer, we saw this shrub growing along the edges of forests in the spectacular Black Sea region of Turkey. I only wish I could have been there when they were in bloom. Our Seattle area shrubs produce dense clusters of white flowers tucked amongst the leaves that are sweetly fragrant. We have three old plants at the Miller Garden and await the flowers every



Osmanthus decorus

year in mid- to late March. The leaves are about 3 to 4 inches long, shiny and deep green with a paler underside. The old branches bend and twist from the trunk forming a broad sculptural vase shape. Give this interesting evergreen plenty of space to fully develop, if you are lucky enough to obtain a plant. Place in open to dappled shade in well-drained soil. It is drought tolerant once established and hardy in USDA zones 8 and 9.

Osmanthus are truly a gardener's delight. The interesting and beautiful foliage combined with fragrant flowers make this a plant everyone should try to work into their garden. So, the next time you are out at the nursery keep your eyes on the lookout for these choice and reliable shrubs.

Learn about some of the most available and useful species and cultivars on the Great Plant Picks website www.greatplantpicks.org. 🌿

Richie Steffen is Executive Director of the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden and president of NHS.



Osmanthus decorus in the Miller Garden

LITERARY NOTES

from the Miller Library

Brian Thompson

I was fortunate to hear Jimi Blake speak at the virtual annual meeting of the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon last November. He radiates enthusiasm for garden plants of all kinds, especially ones newly available to keen gardeners, expressed in a lovely Irish lilt.

Much of that energy, if not the lilt, is captured in a new book, *A Beautiful Obsession*, written with Noel Kingsbury and focused on Blake's Hunting Brook Garden near the Wicklow Mountains south of Dublin. This is not one of the Irish gardens with a favored, western exposure to the Gulf Stream. Instead, it is at a thousand feet elevation with acidic clay, making its limits for plant hardiness similar to many Seattle area gardens.

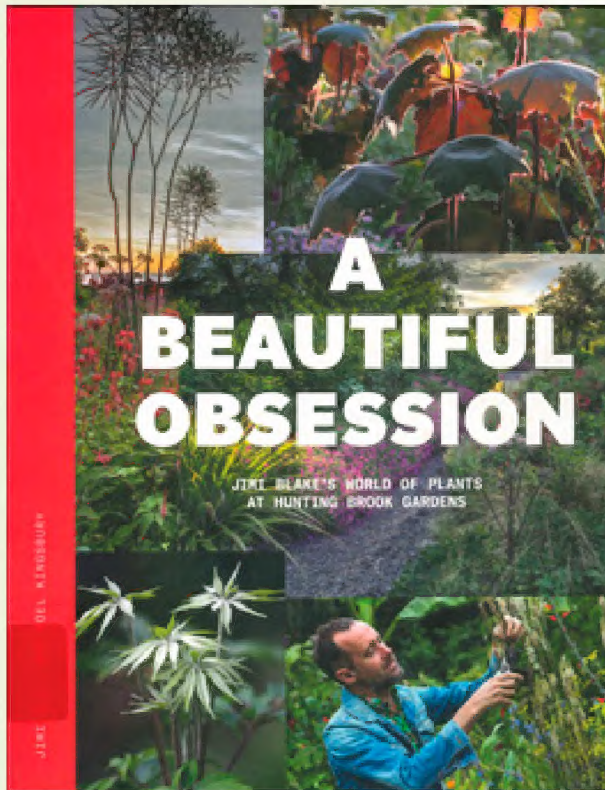
Blake's story is compelling. The youngest child of a large family growing up on a farm, he learned gardening at an early age, greatly influenced by his mother and older siblings. After formal training and a long apprenticeship at an estate farm, he took over a portion of the family property to create Hunting Brook.

From the beginning, this was intended as a teaching garden. A classroom was built into the new house, and courses are taught almost year-round. It is also a very kinetic space, as Blake is frequently swapping out old plants for new and bringing tender plants out of protection every May, only to be returned in October.

Kingsbury acts as the observer as they walk together through the garden, often quoting Blake's comments about the plants, why they were chosen, and which ones may soon be removed. It is not as polished as many books about a collector's garden, but I liked that informal quality, making reading as much fun as admiring the vivid photographs.

Readers of *Gardens Illustrated* magazine have appreciated Blake's seasonal selection of plants over the past year. A plant directory in the book provides a similar sampling of his personal style. For example, red tussock grass (*Chionochloa rubra*), native to New Zealand: "I know I use the word 'favourite' a lot, but this is my favourite grass. I was delighted to find hillsides of it in New Zealand with sheep grazing through it." 🌿

Brian Thompson is the manager and curator of horticultural literature for the Elisabeth C. Miller Library.



GARDENnotes

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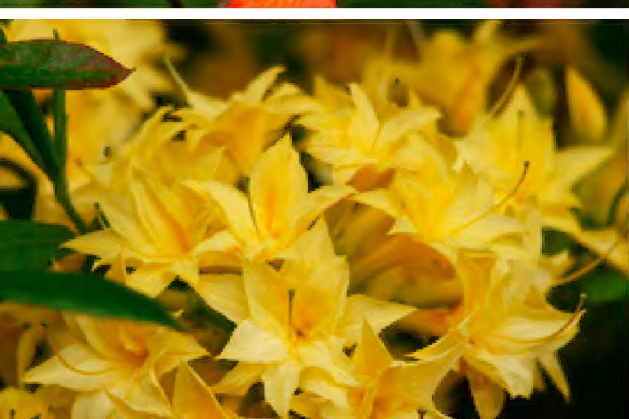
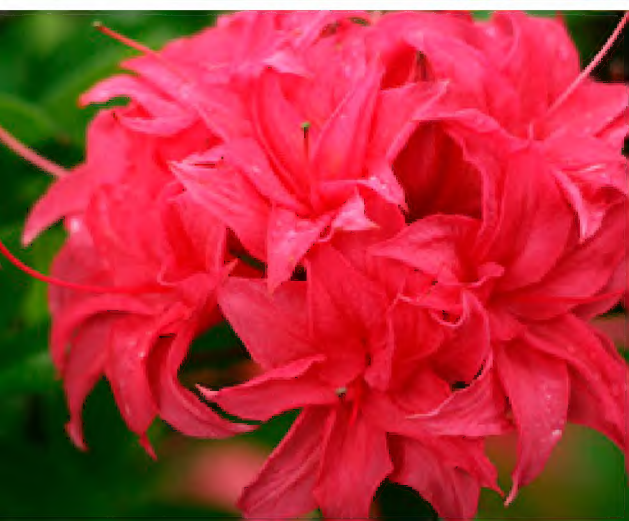
Thank you to our Patrons!

The Lecture Program would not be possible without the tremendous support of our Patrons. Their generosity helps NHS provide an outstanding educational program for Northwest gardeners. With the great success of webinar lectures over the past two years, which has reached an even wider audience than in the past, NHS will continue to provide fine speakers online as our organization opens for in-person classes and lectures on a limited basis.

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President's Message

Dear NHS Members,

I could not be happier to be on the other side of winter! I am never very pleased when I am reminded that my zone 9a plants that I have convinced myself are perfectly hardy in zone 8 really are zone 9 plants. Most of my embarrassing losses have been clipped down, dug out and replaced with a fresh and perfect looking plant. If anyone asks about the former plant resident in that particular location, I will just say that I grew tired of its finicky nature and tossed it to the compost this spring (and in truth, I would not be completely deceiving my competitive gardening friends). My attention is now consumed by the beautiful new spring growth and multitude of blooms making the burnt foliage and frozen branch tips of our arctic blasts a distant and fading memory.

It has been a great winter and early spring with plenty of interesting virtual programs. We have a nice line-up for the rest of spring and summer that you will not want to miss. One exciting addition to our educational program is a return to a few live classes and events. These live classes will have a very limited number of participants, so if you missed getting in, please be patient as we are still being cautious of the pandemic. We are also working on a few regional day-long garden tours which is a great way to meet other members and get some good ideas for your own garden. Later this summer we will be launching a modified Meet-the-Board Tour. This free member's tour will feature some of our board member's private gardens. Details on how to sign up for these tours will be sent by email in late May. We have several board members that are excited to share their gardens with you, including my ten-acre garden in progress near Kingston.

I hope our lovely spring wipes away all thoughts of the damage from last winter, and I hope to see you at some of our future events!

All the best,

Richie Steffen
NHS President



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"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'"

— Robin Williams, American comedian and actor, 1951-2014

Dicentra spectabilis 'Gold Heart'
Image by Richie Steffen